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BAPTISTS IN ERROR:

A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN A CLERGYMAN AND A PARISHIONER

ON THE SUBJECT OF

Infant Baptism.

BY THE

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PREFATORY LETTER.

DEAR READER,—Not to excite acrimonious controversy, but to promote sound and Scriptural views of truth on the subject discussed, do I publish the following conversation. Infant Baptism is much neglected—in my own Parish lamentably so; and it is this wide-spread neglect of the ordinance which has led me—first to to think much, and finally to write, on the subject.

The neglectors of Infant Baptism may be divided into three classes, whom we may style the IGNORANT, the SIMPLY NEGLIGENT, and the MISTAKEN.

The *Ignorant* confound Baptism with Registration, and suppose that when their children have been registered it is as though they have been baptized, blindly confounding a merely human institution with an ordinance of the Lord. Such are given also to speak of Baptism as “a naming,” as though the reason for which parents bring their children to the font were merely to give them their names, and not, as it surely is, to dedicate them to God, that He, accepting the gift, may sanctify it, grafting them by Baptism, as by an instrument, into the Church, and sealing the pardon of original sin by spiritual regeneration. Such as these, by reading the following Dialogue, may learn from it what Baptism really is, viz., God’s instrument of regeneration; and when they understand the sacrament better, they will surely cease to neglect it.

The *Negligent*, on the other hand, are they who understand the nature of this sacrament; look upon it as the instrument whereby God, by His own appointment, doth regenerate; and believe that it is a right thing to be done, and an ordinance in which the grace of God ought to be sought—and that as early as possible—by the Christian parent for his child. And yet they keep putting off the time of bringing their children to Baptism—ever intending to come, but ever finding some new excuse for not coming, until in many cases whole families of children are born into the world, without any attempt being made to have them “born again of water and the Spirit” into the Church of God. These, also, may derive benefit from the perusal of the following Dialogue, for it may serve to remind them that the neglect of the *means* of grace is the neglect of grace itself; that a neglected Sacrament implies a neglected Saviour; and that a neglected Saviour, by His apostle, warns us all, saying, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” “Ye are gone away from *mine ordinances*, return unto ME,” God says by the prophet Malachi*—teaching us thereby that a departure from His ordinances is a departure from Himself; and *that a return to Him involves a return to His ordinances.*

The third class of neglectors of Infant Baptism are those whom we have called the *Mistaken*. These are generally called *Baptists*, because of their peculiar views on the subject of Baptism; for they reject the Baptism of Infants as an error, believing that only persons of a mature age ought to be baptized. With much diffidence, in much charity, and without entertaining any hostile feelings against themselves personally, yet, as most strongly opposed to their views on the subject therein

* Malachi iii. 7.

discussed, I invite the Baptists to read—and that thoughtfully and with prayer—the following pages. For I believe in my heart that the Baptists are *mistaken*. I believe that they are in error, and that the error is a great one. And I am further persuaded, that if they would allow Old Testament analogy, and New Testament probability, and the positive expressions of certain early Christian authors to have their full weight with them, they would cast off their error, repudiate their mistake, and accept, as truth, the teaching of that Article of the Church which says that “the Baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.”*

With these remarks I commit the Dialogue to the waves of public opinion, with the earnest hope and prayer that, by the blessing of God, it may be the humble means of enlightening such as are IGNORANT on the subject of which it treats; of rousing the NEGLECT, and of convincing the MISTAKEN—the which if God grant, to Him be the glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Believe me, dear Reader,

Yours ever faithfully in Him,

T. J. LEE.

CHRIST CHURCH, LUTON:

Advent, 1864.

PREFATORY LETTER TO THE THIRD EDITION.

DEAR READER,—The first edition of this Dialogue was eulogized by many as an argument against the Baptists; and, as such, was styled by one, “unanswerable;” by another, “particularly good and useful;” and by a third, as “read with unmixed pleasure.” To that argument I have added but little, and for that little I am indebted, not to any researches of my own, but to my kind and learned friend, the Rev. H. Tattam, late Archdeacon of Bedford, who supplied me with the few statements which the Dialogue contains concerning the practice of the Jewish Church in the matter of Infant Baptism.

But although, as I believe, strong and unanswerable as an argument against the Baptists, the first edition was, I think, faulty in a very serious particular in its statement of the truth; for in answer to the question, Do you think that the Holy Spirit is always given in Baptism? its reply was, No; so reducing the Sacrament, when unfaithfully administered and received, to nothing but an empty form—a thing which I maintain to be impossible in the case of any ordinance of God. And yet, although in the first edition Baptism was thus, under certain circumstances, shorn of its strength, the

general tone of the Dialogue went to prove that under all circumstances it retained its strength, and that *all* the baptized, whatever their spiritual condition, had been by it united to Christ. Thus the text, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit,"* &c., was quoted as shewing that the whole company of the baptized bore the same relation to God, although only its faithful and obedient portion held that relation savingly to itself; so that in the first edition there was a contradiction between that answer "No" to the question, "Do you think that the Holy Spirit is always given in Baptism?" and the general tone of the work, and, as I conceive, the Truth itself.

This contradiction I have endeavoured, in this third edition, to remove, and I trust that I have done it satisfactorily; for while it is not pretended that the Holy Spirit works invariably—to use language that will be familiar to most—a *converting* work in Baptism, *i.e.*, that He so changes the dispositions as to produce that new creature which "cannot sin;"† yet it is maintained that the Holy Spirit does invariably work in Baptism a *regenerating* work, *i.e.*, that He lodges the soul in a condition of sonship towards God, and of membership towards Jesus Christ, and that He invites it thenceforth, as possessing "the adoption,"‡ to seek for itself "the spirit of adoption," and so to fulfil the intention of its Baptism in the obedience of its after life.

Cleaving to this interpretation of terms, I may state in conclusion that the principle of the first edition was, "God is able and willing to regenerate by Baptism, if he be invited to do so by the prayer of faith;" but the principle of the third edition expresses itself in three words, *viz.*, BAPTISM DOT H REGENERATE. And provided

* St. John xv. 2.

† 1 St. John iii. 9.

‡ Galatians iv. 5.

too high a meaning be not attached to the term "regenerate," I am persuaded that this latter principle is the true one, and that on it alone we can arrive at a true idea of the Church, the family, and the people of God, as they are set before us in Holy Scripture, "a mixed multitude," in which "the evil is ever intermingled with the good."*

Believe me, dear Reader,

Your faithful servant in Christ,

T. J. LEE.

CHRIST CHURCH VICARAGE, LUTON:

December, 1867.

CONVERSATION

ON

INFANT BAPTISM.

THIRD EDITION.

CLERGYMAN. How do you do, Mrs. Price?

MRS. P. Quite well, thank you, Sir; I hope you are well.

CLERGYMAN. Very well, thank you. And how are the children?

MRS. P. They are all very well, Sir, thank you, except little Emily there; she has been very poorly for some days: last night I thought she would have died.

“Indeed!” said the CLERGYMAN, going to the cot, and looking down upon the little one, whose pale face boded but ill for her future health. “Well, she does look poorly. Excuse me, Mrs. Price; Have you had this child baptized?”

MRS. P. No, Sir; I haven’t had any of my children baptized.

CLERGYMAN. Indeed! I am sorry to hear that. But how came you to neglect it, Mrs. Price?

MRS. P. Well, Sir, the Church is a good way off, you know, and as the Meeting is so near, we’ve taken to go there, especially on Sunday nights; and I have heard them say there that none but grown up people, who can repent and speak for themselves are fit to receive Christian Baptism.

CLERGYMAN. And so you believed what they said, did you, Mrs. Price? But did you ever thoughtfully consider the matter, or search the Scriptures, whether these things are so?

MRS. P. No, Sir, I never did; but it seemed to me a very unreasonable thing to believe that a little creature that can neither think nor speak is fit to be baptized.

CLERGYMAN. So it may, Mrs. Price; but Faith takes the Word of God for its guide, not human reason. If we consulted our reason, we should never believe that a man was restored to life by touching the dead body of Elisha the Prophet, Should we?*

MRS. P. No, Sir; I'm sure we shouldn't.

CLERGYMAN. Or if we asked our reason whether it is probable that a handkerchief or an apron carried from the person of St. Paul was made effectual to heal the sick, and to cast out devils, would our reason incline us to believe that?

MRS. P. I think not, Sir.

CLERGYMAN. Or would our reason dispose us to credit the fact that the shadow of St. Peter passing by cured those of disease whom it overshadowed?†

MRS. P. I am quite certain, Sir, that it would not.

CLERGYMAN. And yet all these things are written in the Word of God for our learning; and I find it not an atom more difficult to believe that God can regenerate the soul of man through the sprinkling of water, or renew it through the breaking of bread or the drinking of wine, if it please Him so to work, than I find it difficult to believe that "God wrought" such "miracles" by a handkerchief or apron carried from St. Paul to the sick, or by St. Peter's shadow overshadowing them. It is with Him to save either by one instrument or the other, according to His own will.

MRS. P. So it is, Sir, certainly: we must not dictate to God how to save us, but submit to be saved by Him in His own way. But do you believe that the Spirit of God is always given in Baptism?

CLERGYMAN. I believe that there is an operation of the Spirit of God invariably connected with Baptism, Mrs. Price, just as there is with the Lord's supper and with ordination, with matrimony, and with every other ordinance ordained by God himself; and that in respect of Baptism the operation is—that the Spirit of God does by it unite the baptized person to Jesus Christ and His Church. I believe, also, that this act of uniting a soul

* 2 Kings xiii. 21.

† Acts xix. 12.

‡ Acts v. 15.

to Christ is called Regeneration; for which cause St. Paul, in his epistle to Titus, calls Baptism "the washing of regeneration."*

MRS. PRICE. But have all the baptized been regenerated, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. Yes, *all*; bad as well as good. "By one spirit," says St. Paul, "we are *all* baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and *have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*"† But of some of these he says, in another place, "I fear, lest, when I come, I shall bewail many that have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness that they have committed."‡ St. Paul treats all the baptized on the principle that "they are not all Israel, which are *of* Israel,"§ but he never forgets that all have been admitted by Baptism into the same state of responsibility and of privilege—that all are, by Baptism at least, "*of* Israel." And so neither does the Church: she bewails many unworthy children, but she reckons them all as sons.

MRS. P. But I thought we ought to feel our new birth when it takes place, and be conscious of it all the rest of our lives.

CLERGYMAN. Did you feel your *first* birth, Mrs. Price?

MRS. P. No, Sir; I certainly did not feel that.

CLERGYMAN. Then why expect to feel your second? You were born into the natural world "of the will of man" without knowing it; why not expect to be so born "of the will of God"|| into the spiritual world? Nature is a type of grace; suffer the anti-type to resemble its type, and let both births pass upon the person born without being felt.

MRS. P. But still we ought to feel that we *have been* born again, ought we not, Sir? I mean, we ought to have something within us to tell us whether our souls are in grace or not.

* Titus. iii. 5. † 1 Cor. xii. 13. ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 20 21.
§ Rom. ix. 6, 7.

|| Compare St. John i. 13, with St. James i. 18.

CLERGYMAN. Certainly, Mrs. Price; But when did you begin to feel that you had been born into this world? It was when your powers of existence were so developed that you began to use them, was it not?

MRS. P. Yes, Sir, it was.

CLERGYMAN. Well: so it is with respect to our spiritual birth. We are ushered into the spiritual world at our Baptism without knowing it; but when we begin to try our position, and to test the reality of our relation to God as His adopted children in Christ Jesus, by "seeking the Lord while He is to be found, and by calling upon Him while he is near,"* then we begin to perceive that the home of our souls is within the compass of the "regeneration,"† and that we have but to seek to find *covenanted* mercy. It is not scriptural to say to baptized persons, "Ye must be born again," and I cannot bear to hear preachers so misusing that term; but it is rather scriptural to say to them—"Stir up the gift that is in you, which was given you in the 'washing of your regeneration,' and see that it does not "lie hid in a napkin" like "the buried talent" of the gospel. For so it is that St. Paul speaks to Timothy of the gift he had received in his ordination; and so, surely, should we speak to baptized hearers of the gift they have received in their Baptism; for the sacrament of Baptism is *at least as gift-conveying*, if I may so speak, as the rite of ordination.

MRS. P. You do not think that to be "born again" and to be "converted," mean the same thing then, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. By no means. A verse in St. James shews the distinction between the two admirably.

MRS. P. Which is it, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. It is the twentieth verse of the fifth chapter, and runs as follows:—"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." Observe, Mrs. Price, that it is "*the brethren*" who are addressed, and that by these are meant, the company of the baptized. Observe, also,

* Isaiah lv. 6. † St. Matthew xix. 28.

that they are spoken of as being liable to "err from the Truth," and not to walk worthy of their Christian calling; and observe, further, that in such a case they may be restored by *conversion*—not by *regeneration*, Mrs. Price, but by *conversion*: so that it is regeneration that makes a man a brother; it is conversion that restores the fallen to the brotherhood.

MRS. PRICE. Thank you, Sir; I like that explanation. But suppose, now, that one of my children was baptized and another not, would the unbaptized one be any worse off than the baptized one, provided I dedicated it equally with the other in my prayers to God.

CLERGYMAN. I will answer your question by asking another, Mrs. Price. Suppose a man and woman were, through mutual affection, to consent to live together as married people, *without passing through the form of matrimony*, would they be as much man and wife as if they had passed through the prescribed form?

MRS. P. Oh, no, Sir; they would not be man and wife at all.

CLERGYMAN. Or suppose a man, who fancied himself called to preach the gospel, were to set himself up as a minister of Christ *without submitting to "the laying on of hands," or, as we call it, to ordination*, would he be equally a minister of Christ as one who was not only inwardly called, but also visibly ordained?

MRS. P. No, Sir, I should think not.

CLERGYMAN. No, Mrs. Price, he would not; it is almost as destructive of piety and true religion to magnify the inward grace at the expense of the outward form, as it is to magnify the outward form at the expense of the inward grace—the former produces Puritanism, Quakerism, and other corrupt forms of Christianity which point towards an extreme of utter informality and disorder in religion; while the latter produces Romanism, and a religion of ceremonies and outward signs. And I am bold to tell you, in the strength of these thoughts, that you are as far from obedience to God in neglecting the baptism of your children, as you would be in neglecting the form of matrimony, in case you were going to be married; or

any other form ordained of God to serve, in the hands of His Spirit, for effecting in His Church the purpose assigned to it; for God, who appointed the ordinance of matrimony to serve as the instrument for effecting the union of woman with man, that they twain may be one flesh, did also appoint the Sacrament of Baptism to serve as the instrument of effecting the union of the Church with Christ, that they twain may be one spirit; for the Church is "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." Let those who neglect the uniting instrument in the former case, pass on to neglect it also in the latter: but our wisdom is to let the appointed instrument do its appointed work in both.

MRS. P. But is it not the prayer of faith which effects the regeneration, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. No, Mrs. Price, it is the Sacrament, not the prayer of faith. The prayer of faith should ever accompany the administration of the sacrament of Baptism, but it neither adds to, nor takes from, that which the sacrament itself effects.

MRS. P. I really do not see that, Sir.

CLERGYMAN. Well, Mrs. Price; let us consult again the analogy we have seen to exist between the ordinance of Matrimony and the sacrament of Baptism—an analogy suggested by none other than St. Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians.* Which is it that marries people, Mrs. Price, the ordinance of matrimony or the prayers that accompany it?

MRS. P. The ordinance, Sir, of course.

CLERGYMAN. And suppose there were no prayers, would the ordinance still unite, provided it were duly administered?

MRS. P. Yes, Sir, but it would be very odd.

CLERGYMAN. It *would* be odd, yea, profane and heathenish, or something worse, to enter upon the marriage state without prayer to God. But still, what I want you to observe is that the state *would* be entered, provided the ordinance were undergone, whether with prayer or without it. And so it is with Baptism; for it is Baptism which ties the marriage knot betwixt

* Eph. v. 23.

Christ and His Church—and it does it *of itself*, whether we accompany the administration of the sacrament with the prayer of faith, or not.

MRS. P. Then what is the use of the prayers, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. The greatest—for not only are they necessary to the decent and reverential administration of the sacrament, but they at once teach a truth, and are intended to secure an additional blessing. They teach a truth—for although it is of the nature of Baptism to regenerate, we nevertheless ask for the regeneration,* the Church thereby teaching us that God, although He has invested every ordinance of His with an operation of its own, may turn that operation into evil, if he will. The truth taught, therefore, by the fact of our praying for regeneration in Baptism, notwithstanding that Baptism is of itself invested with regenerating grace, is, that God requires his sacraments to be reasonably and reverently, and not profanely and carelessly, used, lest He turn their blessing into a curse; and as the prayer for regeneration itself teaches this truth, so the prayers for the after renewal and future growth of the regenerate, are so “reasonable a service,” that it is needless to say anything more of them than what is said in the Article, viz., that in the Administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, “faith is confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer to God.†”

MRS. P. It seems strange though, Sir, that we should ask for what we are sure to have, and seek for what is lying before us. If the regeneration is in the Baptism, why seek for it?

CLERGYMAN. It is a mystery, Mrs. Price, I own, and something like saying “Give me this day my daily bread,” when the meat is on the table. But still it is necessary, as I have shewn, to a “reasonable service,” and it vindicates the truth that the blessing may be withheld—or, rather, not withheld, (for we cannot allow that term in any case)—but, turned into a curse instead of a blessing. For the sacraments *must*

* “Grant this child remission of its sins by spiritual regeneration.”—*Baptismal Service*.

† Article xxvii.

operate one way or another. There is no bereaving them of an effect; but the effect may be evil instead of good; and if they are not "life unto life," then are they "death unto death" to such as receive them. And it is possible—nay, it is necessary for the right understanding of scripture, to conceive such a thing as an unblest union even with Jesus Christ, and an "unequal yoking" with the Saviour of the world—for all baptized sinners are so yoked to Him: they are "unequally yoked" together with One with whom they have no concord of heart—yet they *are* yoked; their marriage with Christ is as real as that of the best of Christians—they are "the Lord's people,"* notwithstanding their sins; they are "not as the heathen, as the families of the countries,"† although they are like them in their ways. "Aholah," God said by Ezekiel of the Jewish Church, "played the harlot, when she was mine."‡ and so also by Jeremiah, "Return unto Me, for I am *married* unto you, saith the Lord."§

MRS. P. I see, Sir; at once God's people, and yet not His, because they have forsaken him.

CLERGYMAN. Yes, Mrs. Price; nor is the seeming contradiction unreasonable, or unscriptural. In St. John's gospel, the sixth chapter, our Lord says to the Jews in one verse, "*If ye were* the children of Abraham ye would do the works of Abraham," implying that they were not his children; but in another verse he says, "*I know that ye are* the children of Abraham," implying that they really were so. And so it is under the gospel in the case of the baptized; for they, whatever their works, are by virtue of their Baptism, all the people of God.

MRS. P. Thank you, Sir; you have cleared a great difficulty off my mind; and I confess that I am especially struck by the comparison between the ordinance of matrimony and the sacrament of Baptism, and I do not see why one should be neglected any more than the other.

CLERGYMAN. If either might be neglected, Mrs. Price, it should surely be the less important of the two,

* Isaiah i. 3. † Ezekiel xx. 32. ‡ Ezekiel xxiii. 5. § Jer. iii. 14.

which is that which effects the less important union. But if Baptism ties the marriage knot between Christ and His Church, he, surely, is grievously mistaken who can treat with neglect the sign, or sacrament, of so great a thing.

MRS. P. Surely, Sir; but can you give me some proof from the Bible that there is a work of the Holy Spirit connected with Baptism, and which we may really believe to be in it?

CLERGYMAN. I have given you one already Mrs. Price, and that a very strong one, from 1 Corinthians xii. 13: but there are many that can be added to it. When was it, for instance, that the Holy Spirit first visibly descended on our Blessed Saviour, declaring Him "to be the Son of God with power?"* Was it not at His Baptism?

MRS. P. Yes, Sir, I think I remember that it was.

CLERGYMAN. Yes, it was; for St. Matthew tells us that when Jesus was baptized, He "went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and, lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." † And it has ever been held by the Church, that God in Christ did then institute Baptism to be the sign of the covenant of grace, and the visible and divinely appointed channel for conveying the Spirit of God to the soul, as the Regenerator thereof, "sanctifying water to the mystical washing away of sin." ‡ Not that our Saviour needed to be regenerated; for he needed only, and that for our sakes, that we might believe, to be "declared to be" what He naturally was, "The Son of God with power." Only it is a significant fact that it was *at His Baptism* that His generation of the Eternal Father was thus first publicly declared to the world.

MRS. P. So it is.

CLERGYMAN. Yes, Mrs. Price, it is: and you will further find it true that that same Spirit, who descended upon Jesus Christ at His Baptism, is still, as of old,

* Rom. i. 4. † St. Matt. iii. 16, 17. ‡ Baptismal Service.

ever present in the same sacrament; still using it as the grafting instrument whereby branches are grafted into the Living Vine, members of Adam made members of Christ, and the children of men reborn unto God. Our Saviour's words on the subject are express—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." * He thereby couples the inward grace which regenerates the soul, with the outward sign through which it is conveyed—"The Spirit of God moving," as in the first creation, so in the second, which is our new-creation in Christ Jesus unto good works, "upon the face of the waters." † Nor are St. Peter's words to the convicted multitude on the day of Pentecost less plain, "Repent, and *be baptized* every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; ‡ nor St. Paul's, when he tells us, in his Epistle to the Colossians, that we are "Buried with Christ in Baptism, *wherein* also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." ||

MRS. P. Well, Sir, there is no doubt that these texts prove that Baptism is God's way, and the time of Baptism God's time for giving us His Holy Spirit to seal us as the children of God. But still I don't feel quite clear about the Baptism of little children. You see our Saviour was grown up when He was baptized, and the multitude on the Day of Pentecost were grown up when they were baptized, and every text you have quoted seems to imply that repentance and faith are necessary to the right reception of Baptism. But infants cannot repent or believe.

CLERGYMAN. No, Mrs. Price, they cannot; but that is the very point I wish to satisfy your mind upon. Will you allow me to ask you a few questions about it?

MRS. P. Oh, yes, Sir; I should be very glad; I wish to know the Truth.

CLERGYMAN. Well, then, let me refer you first of all to a passage in 1 Corinthians v. 6, which runs as follows:—"The unbelieving husband is sanctified by

* St. John N. 5. † Gen. ii. 2. ‡ Acts. ii. 38. || Col. ii. 12.

the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." A remarkable passage that, Mrs. Price.

MRS. P. Yes, Sir; but I do not see what it has to do with the baptism of children.

CLERGYMAN. It has this to do with it, Mrs. Price; it proves that children born even of one Christian parent inherit Christianity through their birth, and are in a manner "sanctified from the womb," and should be marked as soon as possible after birth with the mark that distinguishes Christians from the rest of the world.

MRS. P. But the children of Christians are not "holy," are they, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. Not in the sense which implies freedom from inward sin; but in the sense in which to be holy implies to be consecrated to, to be of, and to belong to the Lord—in this sense all baptized people are a "holy people." In this sense the Jews were a holy nation: and yet you know how many of them in every generation were evil. And in the same sense are all Christians, i.e., all the baptized, whether they be men, women, or children, "an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light." * But you are well aware how many in every generation of Christians fall short of this high calling. Of Christendom, as well as Jewry, may it be said with equal force, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, *my people* doth not consider." †

MRS. P. That, Sir, is indeed too true: but then you think that because God calls the children of Christians holy, in the sense in which you explain it, they are therefore entitled to Christian Baptism, do you?

CLERGYMAN. Undoubtedly I do; if, through their birth of Christian parents, they are born into The Good Shepherd's flock, they ought to receive upon them the Good Shepherd's mark, ought they not? You know that every sheep owner has a special mark by which to

* 1 Peter ii. 9. † Is. i. 2, 3.

distinguish his own flock; and with this mark he signs them, *both young and old*. So it is with Christ: Baptism is His mark, and *all* His sheep, whether they be the children of believers, or believers themselves, should have it upon them.

MRS. P. Especially, Sir, when He himself says—
“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” *

CLERGYMAN. Exactly so, Mrs. Price; you have quoted those words just when I should have liked to quote them myself; they suit this part of the subject admirably well, and I think I cannot do better than add to them the words of St. Peter, uttered on the Day of Pentecost, which has ever since the Baptism of the 3.000 been a great Baptism day in the Christian Church—“The promise is unto you, and *to your children*, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” †

MRS. P. Are there any other proofs in the New Testament in favour of the practice of Infant Baptism?

CLERGYMAN. Yes, there are; one is, what is said by St. Paul of the Israelites being baptized unto Moses, which is a figure of the Baptism of Christians into Christ.

MRS. P. Where does He speak of that, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. It is in the tenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, and his words are these: “I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” How many of the Israelites were baptized unto Moses, Mrs. Price?

MRS. P. All of them, Sir.

CLERGYMAN. The children were not left out of that Baptism, then?

MRS. P. What! the mothers leave their infants behind them! Why, the Egyptians would have had them, Sir!

CLERGYMAN. Yes, they would, Mrs. Price; and yet this is what the enemies of Infant Baptism would have

you christian mothers do. They would have you leave them behind on Egyptian territory, unbaptized, and in their state of nature, while you yourselves, baptized into Christ, are, or ought to be, travelling through the wilderness towards the Promised Land.

MRS. P. O, Sir! I cannot hold with that at all; a christian parent should do his best to take all his children with him when he himself sets out for the kingdom of heaven.

CLERGYMAN. Yes, Mrs. Price, and his first step should be to dedicate them to the Lord in Baptism, in the full assurance that the Lord will not refuse to take under His protection what is thus committed unto Him. How beautiful is that prayer in our Baptismal Service—“Grant that whosoever is here *dedicated unto Thee* by our office and ministry may also be endued with heavenly virtues, and everlastingly rewarded, through thy mercy, O Blessed Lord God, who dost live and govern all things, world without end.”

MRS. P. Yes, Sir, it is a beautiful prayer; it reminds me of Hannah dedicating Samuel. *

CLERGYMAN. And so it may; but now, Mrs. Price, we have not quite done with New Testament proofs in favour of the practice of Infant Baptism.

MRS. P. Have we not really, Sir? and yet the case seems made out pretty clear too.

CLERGYMAN. So it may; but we must have it clearer, before we have done. Suppose you were to read in one place after another, that whole households were baptized by the early preachers of Christianity, would you not naturally conclude that it was at least very probable that children were included in those households?

MRS. P. Yes, Sir, I should.

CLERGYMAN. Well, when the jailor at Philippi was baptized, we read that he “was baptized, he and all his.” † We read also that when Lydia was baptized, it was with “her household,” ‡ and that St. Paul baptized “the household of Stephanas.” || Is there not strong presumption that children formed a part of these house-

* 1 Sam. i. 27, 28.

† Acts xvi. 33.

‡ Acts xvi. 15.

|| 1 Cor. i. 16.

holds, and that, with their parents, the Apostle grafted also children, by means of this sacrament, as by an instrument, into the infant Church of Christ?

MRS. P. Yes, Sir, there is. But there is no proof: there is nothing, I mean, that seems to make it sure that there were children in the households.

CLERGYMAN. Nothing beyond the fact, Mrs. Price, that in the households addressed by St. Paul, in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, there certainly were children; for it is not only husbands, wives, servants, and fathers, but *children* also, whom the Apostle addresses with words of pastoral admonition and counsel. "Children," he says, in Colossians iii. 20, "obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." You can take the argument for what it is worth. It is only one of many in favour of the doctrine of Infant Baptism; and while its evidence in support of that practice is not demonstrative, it is certainly probable in the very highest degree.

MRS. P. So it is, Sir. Is there anything else in the New Testament that seems to shew that we ought to baptize children?

CLERGYMAN. There is one proof more, and that a most conclusive one.

MRS. P. And what is that, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. It is the fact that on Baptist principles the epistles of St. Paul could not have been written.

MRS. P. Indeed, Sir; how is that?

CLERGYMAN. I will try to explain. You have perhaps observed that in St. Paul's Epistles all Christians are spoken of as being "*in the Lord.*" Thus in Rom. xvi. we have "the household of Narcissus" spoken of as being "*in the Lord.*" Tryphena and Tryphosa as labouring "*in the Lord;*" and "the beloved Persis," as labouring much "*in the Lord.*" Are wives to submit themselves to their husbands? It is "*in the Lord.*" Are salutations sent from one Church to another, or from an Apostle to a Church? It is "*in the Lord.*" For in Him, it was held, the whole company of believers "lived, and moved, and had their being," Jesus Christ dwelling, through the Holy Spirit, in His body, the Church, and animating its

every healthful member, just as the soul of man dwells in his mortal body, and regulates the movements of every healthy limb. And Baptism was regarded as the means of being united to this body of Christ; "for by one Spirit are we all baptized," saith St. Paul, "into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."* So that to have been baptized, and to be "in the Lord," were terms expressive of the same state, and meant the same thing.

MRS. P. I do not quite understand you yet, Sir; or see what that has to do with the Baptism of Children.

CLERGYMAN. Nay, but you will understand me, Mrs. Price, as soon as I have completed the argument. Let me just ask you one question. Does not St. Paul speak of the children of Christians being "in the Lord," in the very same sense in which he speaks of their parents being in the Lord?"

MRS. P. Does he, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. Indeed he does; for if he says in one place, "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit *in the Lord*,"†—he says in another, "Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*"‡—and this he can only say to them as having been baptized, as well as their parents, into the same body, of which Christ is the indwelling life, and made to drink into the Spirit of Christ.

MRS. P. I cannot help seeing it, Sir; for it is evident that they are.

CLERGYMAN. Well but, Mrs. Price, I must now ask you another question. Could an Apostle, *on Baptist principles*, have written to a Christian Church in the same way, and addressed its children as well as its grown up people "as in the Lord?"

MRS. P. Certainly not, Sir; for they don't hold that children are "in the Lord" until they have shewn signs of seriousness, and so have of themselves sought for baptism.

CLERGYMAN. No, they do not; so that according to the Baptists the Church of Christ on earth consists only of grown up people, who alone ought to be baptized, and so be reckoned as "in the Lord," whereas, according

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

† Col. iii. 18.

‡ Eph. vi. 1.

to St. Paul, parents and children alike, through virtue of their common Christianity, and common Baptism, are to be addressed and reckoned as "in the Lord." Here is a discrepancy here, Mrs. Price, between the evident teaching of the Apostle, and the known principles of the Baptists, which not the wisest brain in England can reconcile or set to rights.

MRS. P. I'm sure *I* can't, Sir; it's quite beyond me.

CLERGYMAN. And it's quite beyond me, too, Mrs. Price; it is a contradiction, and it cannot be reconciled.

MRS. P. But do you suppose that all children who have been baptized will be saved then, Sir? Look what a lot of wicked children there are about, and yet they were most of them baptized when they were infants?

CLERGYMAN. Ah no! no! Mrs. Price; no, by no means; one saying of our blessed Lord is quite enough to settle that question.

MRS. P. And what is that, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. Those words in St. John's gospel—solemn words, Mrs. Price, and searching,—and words which justify the Church view of the "doctrine of Baptisms" most entirely as the truth of God. You will remember them when I quote them—"Every branch IN ME that beareth not *fruit* He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." *

MRS. P. Oh, I remember those words, Sir. They gave me such a sense of peace once when I was ill; for they came over me all of a sudden, and I seemed to feel, as I thought of them, that God had not cast me off, but that He was purging *me*, that I might bring forth more fruit.

CLERGYMAN. And doubtless He *was*, Mrs. Price, and he gave you to know it by bringing those words to your remembrance by the power of the Holy Spirit. But how awful to the barren and careless believer are those other words, are they not—"Every branch in Me that beareth *not* fruit, He taketh away?" Where do you suppose God puts those fruitless branches, when He has taken them away?

* St. John xv. 2.

MRS. P. Into hell, I suppose.

CLERGYMAN. Yes, Mrs. Price, you are right, for it is written—"Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in time of thy wrath: and the fire shall consume them."† And again, "They shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and cast them into a furnace of fire." And yet again, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God;"‡ for "our God is a consuming fire."§ But, observe, Mrs. Price, that whatever becomes of the branches, and of whatever kind they are, *they are alike spoken of as IN CHRIST*—"Every branch IN ME that beareth not fruit He taketh away." But now tell me, Are you Tired?

MRS. P. No, indeed, Sir; I have enjoyed this conversation very much: do pray go on.

CLERGYMAN. Well, I shall not keep you much longer; for poor little Emily there is beginning to get restless in her cot; but tell me now, did you ever think much about what the Old Testament Scriptures seem to teach on this subject of Infant Baptism?

MRS. P. No, Sir, I never did: but I've heard them say at meeting that the Old Testament is not to be much regarded by us Christians, because it belongs to the old dispensation, you know.

CLERGYMAN. I am not surprised at that; for there is a great deal in the Old Testament that pleads in favour of one visible church on earth—of the connexion of that church with the state—and of one authorized ministry to teach the people, and administer the rites of that Church. The Old Testament also contains most striking examples of the exceeding sinfulness of separating from that one visible Church, and of creating other churches, and other ministries, as Jeroboam actually did to the hurt of himself and his subjects;§

* Ps. xxi. 9—Prayer Book Version. † Heb. x. 31. ‡ Heb. xii. 29
§ 1 Kings, xiii. 33, 34. Who can read these verses without being struck with the similarity between Jeroboam's priests and those whom, in our day, Protestant Dissent often sends forth as teachers of the people, advertising women to preach in order to draw a crowd to behold the disgusting novelty, and encouraging boys, and any one whom his own self-conceit thrusts

and as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram attempted to do, but in vain.*

MRS. P. And are we to take warning from their example not to do as they did?

CLERGYMAN. I can only reply to your question, Mrs. Price, by saying that it is of the Old Testament scriptures that St. Paul speaks, when he says that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness;"† and that it is of the Old Testament also that St. Peter speaks, when he says that "we have the more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place—knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not *in old time* by the will of man, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."‡ And ~~when~~ I read the Old Testament, the more I become rooted in the principles of the Church, and alienated from the multiplied disorders and manifold entanglements of Protestant Dissent. It is very easy to get rid of all such impressions as the Old Testament naturally produces by saying, O, that belongs to the Jews! That belongs to the old dispensation! and so forth; but to me the Old Testament Scriptures are those identical writings of which St. Paul said to the Christian Timothy, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.‡"

MRS. P. It never struck me before, Sir, that it is of the Old Testament that the Apostles thus speak; and our Lord, too, when he says, § "Search the Scriptures:

forward into public notice, to fill the pulpit, in utter disregard of the admonition of St. James, "My brethren, be not many teachers (*didaskaloi*), knowing that we shall receive greater condemnation." While self-knowledge teaches the wise to "put themselves in the lowest place," is it not as true of Protestant Dissent as it was of Jeroboam, that it makes "of the lowest of the people priests of the high places," and "whosoever will it consecrateth him, and he becomes one of the priests of the high places?"

* Numbers xvi.

† 2 Tim. iii. 16. ‡ 2 Peter, i. 19-21. § 2 Tim. iii. 15.

for they are they which testify of me"—for it could not have been the New, because the New Testament was only at that time in the writing.

CLERGYMAN. And in our Lord's time had not yet begun to be written. But, however, the Old Testament argument in favour of Infant Baptism is, perhaps, the most clenching of any we have had yet to do with.

MRS. P. How so, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. Well, it frames itself in this way. You know that there are two covenants, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace

MRS. P. Yes, I know that.

CLERGYMAN. You know, also, that the covenant of works had circumcision for its sign—a rite that in its very nature pointed at the character of the covenant of which it was the sign. For as the law "worketh wrath,"† and "the ministration of the law" was a "ministration of death,"‡ so it had for its visible sign a rite that involved the shedding of blood.

MRS. P. Yes, Sir, I have heard that as well.

CLERGYMAN. You know, also, that the covenant of grace has Baptism for its sign—a sign which equally well agrees with the nature of the covenant which it typifies. For it is easy, signifying that God has eased our shoulder of the burden of the law of Moses, and, through the satisfaction of Christ, of the guilt of sin; and it is purifying, seeing that as our "bodies are washed with pure water,"§ so God "purifies the heart by the faith"¶ of Christ.

MRS. P. I had hardly considered these signs in their relation to their separate covenants: but now you speak of it, it seems quite plain.

CLERGYMAN. And now let me ask you a question. Did God, who was the Author of the covenant of works, and who gave circumcision to be the sign of it, expressly command that children should be circumcised?

MRS. P. Undoubtedly He did.

* St. John v. 39. † Rom. iv. 15. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8.

§ Heb. x. 22. ¶ Acts xv. 9.

CLERGYMAN. Well, is it not also probable, nay, is it not absolutely certain, unless God is wonderfully given to change, which we know He is not, that He who is the Author of the covenant of grace, and who has given Baptism to be the sign of that covenant, wills and intends children to be baptized?

MRS. P. I should think so, Sir. Indeed it seems impossible that He should not: quite impossible that God should so change His mind.

CLERGYMAN. Yes, Mrs. Price, and there is another thing; ought not every shadow to be like its substance? for instance, Is not *your* shadow like *you*?

MRS. P. Of course it is, Sir.

CLERGYMAN. Well, but was not the covenant of works the shadow which the covenant of grace cast before it?—the law, as St. Paul says, “the shadow of good things to come?”*

MRS. P. Yes, it was.

CLERGYMAN. Then there ought to be a likeness between the two; and if children were circumcised under the one, they ought to be baptized under the other; if they received the sign of the one, they should receive the sign of the other: for otherwise there is a discrepancy between type and antitype which calls in question even the wisdom of God in adapting the one to the other.

MRS. P. There is no contradicting that, Sir.

CLERGYMAN. But I must ask you one other question, Mrs. Price. Which is the most comprehensive, the law or the gospel? or which was intended of God to take in most people, the covenant of works, or the covenant of grace?

MRS. P. The covenant of grace, I should think.

CLERGYMAN. Of course it was; for it is not through the law, but through the gospel that “in Abraham’s seed all the families of the earth are to be blessed.”† But if room was found for infants in the less comprehensive covenant, shall not room be found for them in the more comprehensive one?

* Heb. x. 1.

† Gal. iii. 8.

MRS. P. I should think so, Sir; we should expect to get more into a large room than into a small one.

CLERGYMAN. Exactly so, Mrs. Price: and yet the Baptist teachers, though compelled to admit, perforce of Old Testament teaching, that room was found for children in the less comprehensive covenant of works, find no room for them in the far more comprehensive covenant of grace; although the Head of that covenant, even its Mediator, Jesus, expressly says, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not."

MRS. P. I must say that sounds very unreasonable.

CLERGYMAN. It *is* unreasonable, Mrs. Price, and contrary to all that is probable in religious subjects; directly contrary to the Old Testament, and almost as plainly contradicted by the New.

MRS. P. How is it that the New Testament has nothing positive in it on this subject, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. Because the subject was not a disputed one when the New Testament was written, Mrs. Price. There are several important questions that cannot be decided out of the New Testament, without an appeal to early Church History as well; as, for instance, whether we are bound, as a part of our duty to God, to observe the Lord's Day; and what form of Church Government we ought to range ourselves under, as the order that comes of God. Had these things been disputed at the time, something clearer would have been written about them. And so it was with Infant Baptism. It was handed down so easily from the Jewish Church to the Christian, and the admission of children into the one by circumcision served for such a precedent for the admission of children into the other by Baptism, that little or nothing was said about it in the earlier ages of Christianity. And that is the reason why the New Testament writers are comparatively silent on the subject.

MRS. P. Is there anybody else who in those times wrote anything about it?

CLERGYMAN. Oh, yes; there was a writer called Justin Martyr, who lived about forty years after the time of the Apostles, and he informs us that in his day

there were many Christians who had been "*made disciples of Christ when they were infants.*" Irenæus also, who lived about thirty years after Justin Martyr, has in his writings the following remarkable expression:—"He (Jesus Christ) came to save all persons by Himself; all, I say, who are *regenerated* by Him unto God; *infants*, and *little ones*, and *children*, and *young men*, and *old men*;" and in these early writers, you should observe, the terms *made disciples* or *discipled*, *regenerated*, and *baptized*, are terms used to signify the same thing; it being generally assumed by them, as it is in the Baptismal Service of the Church, that the gift which God intends to convey by Baptism is *really* conveyed by it, viz., the gift of regeneration, or "grace of life," as the seal of the remission of sins. There was another writer also, called Origen, who lived one hundred years after the Apostles, and he says, "Infants are baptized for the remission of sins; and if it be asked What sins, or at what time they sinned; our answer is, No one is free from pollution, though his life should be but the length of one day upon the earth." And to these quotations from the writings of the earliest fathers I must add an interesting historical fact, which took place in Africa about one hundred and fifty years after the times of the Apostles. There lived in those days a Bishop called Fidus, who entertained some doubts whether children ought not to be baptized on the eighth day, in order to bring the administration of Baptism into more perfect conformity with the administration of circumcision. In order to settle this question, Cyprian, who was then Bishop of Carthage, called together an assembly of sixty-six bishops, who unanimously concluded that children might be baptized as soon as they were born, if the parents so thought fit. And this fact, of the truth of which there is no doubt, is quite sufficient to show us what was the practice of the Church with respect to the Baptism of infants in those early times. Nor are these records of early Christian practice all that we have to guide us in this matter, beyond what is written in Holy cripture; for the early Church itself had a guide in the practice of

the Jewish Church for many generations before St. John the Baptist. The Jews used to baptize proselytes to their religion—men, women, *and children*. Thus in the Talmud we read that “a person is not a proselyte until he be both circumcised and baptized.”* And Maimonides, a Jewish writer, has the following expression of the opinion of the effect of this Jewish Baptism on the *infant children* of the heathen:—“An Israelite that takes a little heathen child, or that finds a little heathen infant, and baptizeth him for a proselyte—behold he is a proselyte.”† So that when our Lord adopted Baptism to be the sign of the Christian covenant, the practice of baptizing infants had long been a settled thing in the Jewish Church. I consider the point now proved.

MRS. P. I really am very much obliged to you, Sir, for all the information you have given me on the subject. I certainly do think very differently about it, from what I did. If it is not tiring you, Sir, before you go may I ask you one or two questions?

CLERGYMAN. By all means, Mrs. Price; I shall be pleased to answer them, if I can.

MRS. P. If infants ought to be baptized, Why was not Jesus Christ himself baptized when he was an infant?

CLERGYMAN. Because He came into the world to become the Author of the covenant of which Baptism is the sign: and He could not become the Author of a covenant until He had arrived at years of maturity, neither could He receive that which He had not yet instituted. Baptism as a *Christian* ordinance was not in existence when Christ was an infant. And besides this, as the Messiah, and a Teacher come from God, our Lord had not only to originate the Gospel and its ordinances; but He had also to vindicate, as of Divine origin, the rites and customs of the Jewish law. To the latter object He devoted the first thirty years of his life, which He spent in faultless obedience to the law of Moses; to the former he devoted the three years

* Talm. in Jebamoth, cap. iv. † Maimonides in Avadim, cap. viii.

and a-half which intervyned between His baptism and His death. You will see my meaning when I have quoted the words of a celebrated Christian poet, who has written admirably on this subject, as follows:—

“ By blood and water too,
 God’s mark is set on thee,
 That in thee every faithful view
 Both covenants might see.”*

MRS. P. I think I understand: and now let me ask you one more question:—When do you baptize? for I am fully resolved to bring my children to Church, and not to delay any longer.

CLERGYMAN. In the middle of the service, Mrs. P. as the rubric directs.

MRS. P. But why do you Baptize in the middle of the service, Sir? Would it not be more comfortable after the congregation have gone out?

CLERGYMAN. It might be, Mrs. Price; but the rubric enjoins us to baptize after the second lesson, and that for two reasons.

MRS. P. And what are they, Sir?

CLERGYMAN. One is the reason stated by the Church herself, which is, that the people present may themselves be reminded of their own baptismal vows, and be stirred up to the more faithful performance of them; and the other is that by baptizing in public we bear witness to the importance and efficacy of intercessory prayer. “Pray one for another,” says St. James; and where is the occasion on which the prayers of God’s people could be more appropriately asked than when infants are being admitted by Baptism into the Church, and when the young of the flock are being gathered into the fold? Such is the force of this reason in many minds, Mrs. Price, that even when Baptism is irregularly administered after the service, they make a point of staying behind to join in the prayers of the service. For every thoughtful Christian cannot but reflect, that though Baptism does of itself unite with Christ, yet it by no means insures after-faithfulness in such as have been by its means wedded to the Lord; and that when taken from the font, the baptized are ushered into a

sphere of temptation and conflict often under circumstances very disadvantageous to their growth in grace, and therefore they regard the prayers as occupying a most important place in the public administration of Baptism, and join in them with all their hearts, committing the keeping of such as are being baptized into the hands of God, and beseeching Him to let the eye of His providence watch over them for good to the end of their days. For these two reasons, then, I always baptize after the second lesson, as the Church directs.

MRS. P. Thank you, Sir. I quite understand now why the administration of Baptism should be as public as possible; for the more the prayer of faith accompanies it the better. You will see me, I hope, at the Church with all my children, the very next opportunity.

CLERGYMAN. That is right, Mrs. Price; and do pray before you come that you may have faith of the operation of God in and through the ordinance: for "according to your faith shall it be unto you:" the more faith in those who bring the children, the more grace for them.

MRS. P. I will try, Sir: and I thank you exceedingly for the trouble you have taken to put me right on the subject. Good bye.

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